ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
September 18, 2002

TO: Illinois State Board of Education

FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent  
Dr. Christopher Koch, Director

Agenda Topic: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001  
Highly Qualified Teacher Guidance Document

Materials: Illinois Certification Requirements Related to NCLB  
Definition of Highly Qualified Teacher

Staff Contact(s): Lou Ann Reichle, Frank Llano

Purpose of Agenda Item

To consider a document that defines Illinois certification requirements in relation to the No Child Left Behind Act definition of “highly qualified teacher”.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

The Board will review and approve the document so that it can be disseminated to districts, Regional Offices of Education, and the public.

Background Information

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 set new requirements for paraprofessionals and teachers related to education background, certification, and content knowledge. ISBE is required to ensure that districts meet the new requirements and achieve the ultimate goal of having all of their teachers and paraprofessionals in compliance with the NCLB requirements by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. ISBE also assured in its consolidated application for NCLB funds, approved in June 2002, that the percentage of highly qualified teachers in Illinois would increase annually by 5%.

Under the NCLB, teachers are considered “highly qualified” if they have full State certification and have demonstrated subject matter competence in the areas taught. In providing a definition of “highly qualified” for teachers who already hold current Illinois certificates, ISBE is offering guidance on what is considered full state certification and is setting the “high objective uniform State standard of evaluation” necessary to determine competency in the subject matter taught as required by the federal law.
This document has been shared with the following groups and organizations in order to request comments, feedback and edit suggestions: Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Association of School Boards, Regional Office of Education representatives, Illinois Education Association representatives, Illinois Federation of Teachers representatives, and State Teacher Certification Board members. It has also been forwarded to the U. S. Department of Education to request comments and feedback.

Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications

Policy Implications
Local school districts and Regional Offices of Education have requested in-depth information on the teacher and paraprofessional requirements. The federal law promises to impact hiring and assignment decisions in all of Illinois schools, regardless of Title I funding. This is due to the fact that by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, all schools must ensure the State and federal departments of education that all of their instructional personnel who teach core academic subjects meet the qualifications and criteria outlined in the Act.

Clear and timely communications from ISBE will provide the critical information that local districts need to make decisions in relation to assignment of teachers and hiring of both teachers and paraprofessionals. With insufficient information, districts are more likely to make inappropriate decisions that could adversely impact both the districts and the state agency. Ultimately, a loss of funding could result from decisions made at the local district level that are based on insufficient information.

Budget Implications
Local school district budgets may be affected by the increased qualification requirements for paraprofessionals and also by the need to assist paraprofessionals and teachers in meeting the new requirements. As paraprofessionals begin to meet the qualifications by obtaining Associate’s degrees or 2 years of postsecondary study, it is likely that they will also demand increased salaries for their higher levels of education. Teachers who are assigned to subject areas “out of field” will be expected to obtain proper credentials to teach those subjects. Some districts may use funds to support the professional development and additional education coursework that these individuals will require. In addition to this, districts may choose to re-assign individuals to proper subject matter areas, thus leaving critical areas of need unfilled. Additional costs could be incurred for the hiring of new teachers to instruct in the subject areas of critical need (i.e. Physics).

Legislative Action
ISBE legal staff and Teaching and Leadership department staff have developed a proposal to change the requirements for the Transitional Bilingual certificate (Type 29) as a result of NCLB requirements for “highly qualified teachers”. Individuals who hold
only this certificate, in its present form, cannot be considered “highly qualified”. It will be necessary to align this certificate’s requirements with those in the federal law.

**Rulemaking**

In addition to proposed legislative changes, an amendment to ISBE’s rules on non-certificated personnel is necessary to change the requirements for a teacher aide approval. The requirements would change from 30 hours to 60 hours for a teacher aide approval in order to align Illinois paraprofessional requirements to the federal requirements.

**Communication**

There is a critical need to communicate qualification requirements for teachers and paraprofessionals so that hiring and assignment decisions can be made at the local level. An additional issue is the requirement that schools inform parents when students are taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not “highly qualified”. Districts must also inform parents that they have the right to request information about the professional qualifications of any teacher in the district. It is imperative to provide this information in an expedient manner to allow sufficient time for districts and educators to remain in compliance with the federal law, and begin planning for professional development and other needed education preparation that will allow individuals to meet NCLB requirements.

**Pros and Cons of Various Actions**

**Pro:** Dissemination of the document on Illinois certification requirements related to the NCLB definition of a “highly qualified teacher” will provide local districts with the needed information to make hiring and assignment decisions, thus supporting districts in remaining in compliance with the federal legislation.

**Con:** There may be individuals and groups that object to some of the contents of the document because it could possibly affect their future employment status and their professional status in the community.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

The Superintendent will recommend that the document regarding highly qualified teachers be widely disseminated in a timely manner.

**Next Steps**

There will be a need to continuously update information on the web and to provide regular communications to districts and ROEs as ISBE receives further guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on this federal legislation.

Further the reporting requirements under NCLB cause a need for a state definition of “highly qualified teachers.” Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, local districts that receive Title I funds are required to report on the annual progress of the district and
each school on increasing the number of highly qualified teachers. ISBE is required to report annually to the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education the percentage of classes being taught by highly qualified teachers in the State, local districts and schools, and to describe the progress made in increasing the number of such teachers.